

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks.

Initially, Applicants wish to express their appreciation to the Examiner for her courtesy in discussing the issues raised in the Official Action with the Applicants' representative on October 6, 2005.

The claims have been amended along the lines discussed with the Examiner. Claim 9 has been amended to change the phrase "the method is conducted" to -- said step of adjusting is conducted --.

In view of this amendment, it is believed that the rejection of the claims on the basis that there is no tie-in relationship between the adjusting and maintaining step has been overcome.

Claim 9 has further been amended to positively recite a step of supplying the reaction gas and distilling water.

Accordingly, this ground of rejection is deemed to be overcome.

Claims 12 and 14 have been amended to correct the multiple dependencies of the claims.

Accordingly, the rejection based upon the phrase "the collection column" is deemed to be overcome.

Regarding the phrase "predetermined range", the Applicants' representative understands that the Examiner has kindly agreed to withdraw this rejection on the basis that the phrase is well understood in the art.

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that each ground of rejection set forth in the Official Action under 35 USC 112, first and second paragraphs, has been overcome.

Claims 9-16 are rejected under 35 USC 103 as unpatentable over EP 0778255. This ground of rejection is respectfully traversed.

The cited reference fails to disclose or suggest the claimed method as amended. Specifically, the cited reference fails to disclose or suggest a method of collecting acrylic acid from a reaction gas while maintaining the ratio of weight fraction of acrylic acid in the bottoms

of the collection device (B) relative to the weight fraction of acrylic acid to all condensible ingredients in the reaction gas (A) at a value less than $1.25(B/A)$.

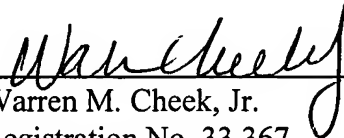
Moreover, the cited reference fails to teach or suggest the importance of monitoring the weight fraction of acrylic acid in the bottoms of the collection device. Further, the cited reference fails to disclose or suggest the importance of monitoring the weight fraction of acrylic acid to all condensible ingredients in the reaction gas. Furthermore, the cited reference fails to disclose or suggest that maintaining B/A less than 1.25 is critical in reducing the loss of acrylic acid from the gas distilled from the top of the collection column.

The Examples and Comparative Examples on pages 14-18 clearly demonstrate the criticality of maintaining the condition of B/A less than 1.25 in reducing the loss of acrylic acid from the method. Since the cited reference fails to disclose or suggest the criticality of maintaining B/A less than 1.25, it is respectfully submitted that the Comparative Examples of the specification are representative of the results of the reference method. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the instant specification clearly demonstrates the criticality and unexpected results of the claimed method which incorporates the step of maintaining B/A less than 1.25.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the amended claims are patentably distinct and not obvious from the teachings of the cited reference. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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